



THE AMERICAN DREAM:

Research and Persuasive Essay Assignment



Purpose

The purpose of this research is to get you to think about what people mean by the “American dream” and what your personal view of the American dream is. As you conduct your research, you should consider the guiding question: how attainable is the American dream for the average person? One of your main research goals should be to answer this question.

Suggestions for Research Topics

- The average cost of buying a home in America generally or in a specific city
- The average income of an American adult generally or by industry
- The typical cost of living expenses of a family (child care, food, bills, etc.)
- Amount of opportunity in different parts of the country
- Statistics about happiness in American society
- Statistics about the cost of an education
- Statistics about the various classes in America (percentage of rich Americans vs. middle-class Americans vs. those in poverty)
- Social mobility in America

Collecting Research

I suggest generating research questions, then taking notes on your sources, always keeping track of where you found your information. Use legitimate sources like databases, government census information, or reputable online news carriers and magazines.



Common Core Standards:

College and Career Anchor Standard for Writing #7 (Gr. 9-12)

Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

College and Career Anchor Standard for Writing #8 (Gr. 11-12)

Gather relevant information from multiple authoritative print and digital sources, using advanced searches effectively; assess the strengths and limitations of each source in terms of the task, purpose, and audience; integrate information into the text selectively to maintain the flow of ideas, avoiding plagiarism and overreliance on any one source and following a standard format for citation.



In this persuasive essay, you will explore your understanding of the American Dream by accomplishing all of the following:

- **Explain** what the “American dream” means to you. Arrive at your own understanding of the phrase. There are many components to the idea of the American dream. Some components you might want to consider are: financial dreams, emotional dreams, spiritual dreams, social dreams, dreams about location, and dreams about physical appearance.
- **Answer two central questions:** “how attainable is the American dream for the average person?” and “did Gatsby achieve the American dream?”. Your answer to these questions will be the focal point of your essay. In your thesis, you should give arguments related to these questions and provide clear reasons why your claim is valid. Support your central claim about the general achievability of the American dream using the research that you undertook for this assignment. In your paper, make sure to incorporate research from at least **four** reputable sources. In addition to proving your main arguments, make sure that you address any counterclaims that someone on the opposite side of the argument would make. Acknowledge the evidence and the strengths of the arguments that someone with a different perspective might bring up, but ultimately show why your basic stance is superior. When discussing *Gatsby*, use strong textual details for support.

Basic Guidelines:

- Minimum Length: **4 full pages of body** Maximum Length: **6 full pages of body**
- Use MLA formatting, cite all sources internally, and include a Works Cited page

Common Core Standards:

College and Career Anchor Standard for Writing #1 (Gr. 11-12)

Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

- Introduce precise, knowledgeable claim(s), establish the significance of the claim(s), distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, and create an organization that logically sequences claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence.
- Develop claim(s) and counterclaims fairly and thoroughly, supplying the most relevant evidence for each while pointing out the strengths and limitations of both in a manner that anticipates the audience’s knowledge level, concerns, values, and possible biases.
- Use words, phrases, and clauses as well as varied syntax to link the major sections of the text, create cohesion, and clarify the relationships between claim(s) and reasons, between reasons and evidence, and between claim(s) and counterclaims.
- Establish and maintain a formal style and objective tone while attending to the norms and conventions of the discipline in which they are writing.
- Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the argument

